

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2020

Important Dates

*America's Newspapers
Webinars*

[Digital Selling Skills for
Sales Executives](#)
Sept. 30, 11 a.m.-noon

[NNA.org/convention](#)
October 1-3, 2020
#NNAathome

**National Newspaper Week
October 4-10, 2020**

Statement of ownership due
in October

National Newspaper Week 2020
October 4-10

Content available for your news
products through Alabama Power
Foundation/APA Journalism
Foundation grant

Nominate someone for APA's
Lifetime Achievement and Emerging
Journalist awards

Ozark editor marks 63 years
on the job

APA Journalism Foundation
internship with Tallapoosa
Publishers, Inc.

Join NNA's online convention



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Statement of ownership filing due

The publisher of each publication sending Periodicals Class Mail must file USPS Form 3526 by Oct. 1 of each year at the original entry post office.

The information provided on Form 3526 allows the U.S. Postal Service to



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POSTAL SERVICE**

determine whether the publication meets the standards of Periodicals mailing privileges. Newspapers with electronic subscriptions to claim will also use Form 3526x.

The required information must appear in an issue of the publication whose primary

mailed distribution is produced:

- Not later than Oct. 10 for publications issued more frequently than weekly.
- Not later than Oct. 31 for publications issued weekly or less frequently, but more frequently than monthly.

For all other publications, in the first issue whose primary mailed distribution is produced after Oct. 1.

Please send a copy of your Statement of Ownership to the APA office at: 600 Vestavia Parkway, Ste., 291, Vestavia, AL. or email to jaclyn@alabamapress.org.

Nominate someone for APA's Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist awards

The APA board of directors is seeking nominations for the Alabama Press Association Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist Awards for 2021.

The Lifetime Achievement recognizes outstanding service and accomplishments spanning a career in journalism in Alabama.

For Lifetime Achievement, APA members may nominate any person who, at the time of selection, is a living, present or former newspaper executive or employee of a newspaper in Alabama. Nominees must have spent a significant percentage of their newspaper careers in Alabama. Nominees must also have a minimum of 25 years of service in the newspaper industry and may not be nominated by a family member. Areas of service include production, editorial, advertising and circulation.

The Emerging Journalist Award recognizes a young journalist with excellence in the field and someone who maintains high standards of quality and ethics. The award aims to reinforce the importance of a journalist's role by recognizing and nurturing talent to promote quality journalism.

Nominees must be an employee or regular contributor to an APA-member newspaper. This award is open to nominees younger than 30 with less than five years of experience writing professionally for a newspaper.

The selection committee will consist of APA's four officers and two additional board members. Nominations are due by Nov. 12. Nomination forms are available on the APA website [HERE](#) (EJ) and [HERE](#) (LA).

National Newspaper Week - October 4-10



National Newspaper Week 2020 will be observed Oct. 4-10. The 80th annual celebration marks the impact of journalists in their communities.

This year's theme is "America Needs Journalists." Material, including editorials, cartoons, promotional ads and more, is now available at no cost to APA members [HERE](#).

Please plan to celebrate National Newspaper Week by downloading these materials and devoting as many column inches as possible to remind readers of the important role our journalists play in our communities and in our country.

Please also make it local by editorializing about your newspaper's unique relevance. This can be about your duties as government watchdog, your role as a community forum and coverage of community events, publication of timely public notices, etc.

NNW is sponsored by Newspaper Association Managers, Inc., the consortium of North American trade associations representing the newspaper industry. APA has paid a fee so that members can download the information at no cost.

Content available for your news products through grant

Last month, we announced a grant program funded by the Alabama Power Foundation and administered by the APA Journalism Foundation for journalists to write stories of statewide interest for use in APA newspapers. These are for journalists that have been struggling due to layoffs, furloughs or reduced wages during this pandemic.

The first story that is now available for you to use is about what one community, Jasper, is doing with their abandoned mall. Many communities in Alabama have retail space sitting unused and abandoned. The story is written by Nicole Smith and edited by retired journalism professor, Steve Stewart.

You can find this first story and photos

on BamaNet located in the "Journalist Grant Articles" folder. It is the "Jasper Mall story" and contains several photos to go with the story.

"We appreciate the opportunity to help our journalists and help our newspapers who need content at the same time," APA Executive Director Felicia Mason said. "We currently have three other stories in the works that will be available soon."

Leigh Leigh Tortorici, who is managing the project for the APA office, said she appreciates Steve Stewart's guidance and willingness to work one-on-one with the journalists. "We are relying on Steve's expertise to make sure we are providing high quality stories from inception to publication to our members," Tortorici said.

Newspapers should credit the story and any photos used (cutlines are provided) and be sure to include the editor's note, identifying the source of the story.

This story and others that will follow are for your use to provide feature stories for your newspapers and websites. Contact Felicia (felicia@alabamapress.org) or Leigh Leigh (leigh2@alabamapress.org) with any questions. Please let us know when you use these stories. We will share it with the journalists and use in our grant use report.

Several grants are still available at \$500 each, so please encourage any of your staff that would qualify to apply: <https://www.alabamapress.org/2020-journalist-grant-program/>.

APA Journalism Foundation internship with Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc.

By Abby Driggers

Editor's Note: The APA Journalism Foundation awarded eight \$1,500 internships over the summer. Here is a report from Abby Driggers, summer intern for Tallapoosa Publishers. This is just one example of the benefits of your support of the Foundation. If you have not made a pledge this year, please consider joining other APA member newspapers in supporting the Foundation.

Good journalism doesn't come easy.

It takes effort to ask the right questions, to cultivate subject-matter expertise, to continuously tune into the police scanner, to stay late writing in the office, to write a story that surprises, inspires or provokes.

Good journalism takes a village, and I am proud to have been a part of the one at Tallapoosa Publishers.

The newsroom, including the advertising and circulation team, has a committed staff of veteran professionals - each of whom I respect and hope to have soaked up wisdom from during my summer.

Each edit, rewrite, comment and advice throughout my internship taught me far more than any course could, and I value the time taken by the staff to strengthen my skillset during the fast-paced news cycle.

At my desk, I was a firsthand witness to each of their pursuits of truth, breaking news and accomplishments of Tallapoosa County's 40,367 people. I was allowed to take the lead on community developments, feature local artists and showcase ordinary

people doing extraordinary things weekly.

However, the moment I realized I was among special individuals was my first week in the office.

The Alabama Press Association awards were announced my second day in Alexander City, as I switched from remote to in-person in late June.

During the virtual ceremony, I remember seeing everyone's faces wait in anticipation of the categories, cheering one another on and taking a much-deserved moment to acknowledge their accomplishments.

Later that evening, I read a column from the managing editor titled Each long day in the newsroom is worth it. I felt as if all of my sentiments toward journalism had been taken from my psyche and published word for word. At that moment, I became cognizant of the opportunity I have received.

I made a point to grab a copy the next day, and I cut the column out for my bulletin board by my front door.

As I left and returned from my internship every day, the words reminded me of my personal "why" and the TPI's team "why" - the readers.

Digging through documents and tracking down sources are some of my favorite pastimes. But it also takes a lot of time and resources - all of which wouldn't be possible without support from readers.

By reading letters to the editor, editing columns, discovering letters to Santa in July and seeing local citizens stop by to pick up the print publications, I have grown

to appreciate the people of Alexander City and their commitment to their local news organization.

In a time where print is declining and national publications swoop in to report on small towns throughout America, I have renewed faith in community journalism.

What I have learned during my internship is the Tallapoosa Publishers' newsroom serves their community well because they care.

Within the organization, there is a collective responsibility to tell their neighbors' stories, keep cities safe and hold government accountable.

My internship was a wonderful blend of education and application, and one where I leave more empowered to continue to report on the happenings of my fellow Alabamians.

There is much work left to be done, and I leave confidently knowing TPI will continue its efforts to do just that.

And yet, most importantly, I wrap up my time with TPI knowing local news still matters.

When I was told of the internship position, I drove to Alex City to pick up as many copies of each newspaper as I could. Then, a couple of weeks later, I made the drive again - same roll of quarters, same gas station.

I look forward to making the drive many more times to remain in touch with the local events best told by the inspiring, driven journalists at TPI.

Join NNA's online convention Oct. 1-3, 2020

The National Newspaper Association is holding a virtual convention Oct. 1-3, 2020 – Today's Readers, Tomorrow Leaders.

NNA's 134th Annual Convention and Trade Show will address pressing business objectives of community newspaper owners, publishers and senior staff with educational sessions and peer sharing activities.

Your \$50 full registration includes general sessions, round table discussion sessions, a virtual exhibit hall and tickets to a welcome reception, BINGO family fun

night, Better Newspaper Contest awards ceremony and the James O. Amos award ceremony.

We value the time and resources you are considering investing in NNA's 134th Annual Convention and Trade Show and promise you will not be disappointed. See more information at: <https://www.nna.org/convention>. Registration is \$50.

#NNAatHome

Meet us online for this year's NNA Convention and Trade Show, October 1-3, 2020!

LEARN what it takes for a community newspaper to succeed in today's environment

HEAR from and network with owners and publishers at publications across the U.S.

VISIT our online exhibitors and learn about the valuable solutions they provide

NNA.org/convention

People

Roger Carden recently retired after 43 years as advertising director at the Northwest Alabamian in Haleyville.

Carden started at the Alabamian in May 1977 at the age of 22. He began as a printer within the job shop, eventually moving into a lead man role within that area of the

company.

After selling job printing, Carden had the opportunity to move into ad sales and serve as the Alabamian's advertising director, an opportunity he was proud to take.

Melica Allen will replace Carden as

advertising manager. She started full-time in June 1978 and has worked in almost every department during her tenure. She came to the news department in 1984, and was named editor in 1990, serving in that capacity for 25 years. She has worked as sports editor for the past few years

Ozark editor marks 63 years on the job

In August, Joe Adams, celebrated 63 years as the editor of The Southern Star. He is Alabama's longest serving active editor.

The Southern Star has been in the Adams family since it was founded by Adams' great grandfather in 1867.

Starting at age 12, Adams learned how to run a hand-fed folder. He started writing sports a few years later.

Adams studied journalism at the University of Alabama, and was the sports editor at the Crimson White, UA's student newspaper.



After a stint in the Army, Adams returned home to work at The Star with his father, and became editor in 1957.

Adams was president of APA in 2000, and was honored with the APA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

Photo: Editor-Publisher, Joseph H. Adams, displays an anniversary issue of The Southern Star in its 140th year of publication and his 50th year as editor in 2007 with a portrait of Joseph A. Adams, founder of The Southern Star in 1867.

Help Wanted

Multimedia Journalist - Alexander City

The Alexander City Outlook is looking for a talented multimedia journalist to join our team. We want to expand our digital platform and fully explore the limits of digital coverage and need a dedicated and innovative storyteller to lead that effort. We have an award-winning newspaper; however, our digital product is quickly becoming the focus in our community. That's why we need talented journalists who understand the possibilities and aren't afraid to try new approaches to improve coverage through video, audio, infographics and social media. Most importantly, we want candidates who are constantly adapting their approach in the service of better storytelling.

The ideal candidate would be well-versed in digital news presentation and constantly looking for the next creative element to add to a story. While experience in journalism is

crucial, we want someone who is not content writing one story per day. We want a candidate who is committed to giving our audience the best possible coverage of the community by leveraging all the tools at our disposal.

If you are willing to develop new skills to tell stories across multiple platforms in new and interesting ways, we want you in Alexander City. We may be considered a small paper, but we view that as an opportunity to try unique ideas and take big swings.

We don't just want to put our news online; we want to create an indispensable print and digital news product that tells the most complete version of every story, big or small, in our community.

If you think you can help us do that, send your resume, cover letter and recent work samples to managing editor Santana Wood at santana.wood@alexcityoutlook.com.

Press Operator - Florence, AL

TimesDaily has an immediate opening for a Press Operator. Candidate must be able to setup press for daily newspaper printing, monitor and inspect quality of papers, maintain registration and proper ink density, perform general maintenance and other duties as required. Must be able to lift up to 50 lbs., be forklift certifiable and have mechanical experience or training. Prior experience with newspaper press and machine maintenance is preferred or other press printing experience will be considered. Candidate must be able to work a flexible schedule including nights, days, and weekends; and work in a fast paced environment. Mail resume to 219 West Tennessee Street, Florence, AL 35630, or email to hollie.coella@timesdaily.com.

Obituaries

Jim Crawford Jr.



Jim Crawford Jr., a third-generation newspaper owner, died Monday, September 21, 2020 at Helen Keller Hospital in Sheffield, Alabama. He was 91.

His family publishes four newspapers, and operates Mid-State Publishing Company that Mr. Crawford established in 1967. It was one of the first offset web printing facilities in the Southeast.

The Lawrenceburg native, the husband of Marie K. Crawford for 61 years and the father of seven children, was involved in his community far beyond its twice-weekly newspaper, The Democrat-Union. He was chairman of the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Committee that established the Lawrenceburg-Lawrence County Airport. Mr. Crawford also was integral to the work that led to the Lawrence County Public Health Center, and served as chair of the county's Board of Health.

Mr. Crawford's community involvement continued the efforts over the years of his family, which was directly involved in the development of David Crockett State Park, and the establishment of the D-U Cowbell football game, in 1950, between Lawrence and Giles county high schools.

In 2010, the twice-weekly publication was inducted into the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Small Business Hall of Fame, and is the oldest existing business in Lawrence County. The D-U is one of four publications owned and operated by Mr. Crawford. Those include two in Alabama, the Colbert County Reporter in Tusculumbia and the Standard and Times in Sheffield along with the Hickman County Times of Centerville, TN. All are weeklies, and several of Mr. Crawford's children, the fourth generation, are involved in their operation. Mr. Crawford attended Lawrence County High, where he played football and basketball, and he graduated from Columbia Military Academy, where he also played football. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee, where he was president of Kappa Alpha fraternity.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, the young

Crawford served during the Korean War on the USS Perry DD844 destroyer, where he was a rescue swimmer and a member of the Navy swim team.

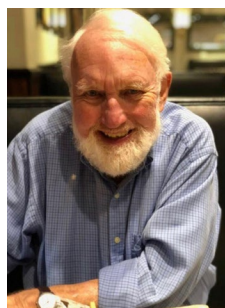
Back home, he was a swim instructor, an active American Red Cross member and taught water safety. He also was a Boy Scout leader.

Jim and Marie married in 1959, five months after they met at City Drug Store when she was on break from her job with an accounting firm. She had moved from Jackson to Lawrenceburg, and they raised their seven children there before moving to Killen, AL.

Mr. Crawford was preceded in death by his parents, Jim Crawford, Sr., Estelle Bethel Crawford; granddaughter, Sarah Catherine Whitehead; and grandson, Lucas Sean Brasili.

He is survived by his wife, Marie Crawford; his children, Jimmy Crawford, III, Charlie Crawford and wife, Melinda, Estelle Whitehead, Mary Ellen Wallace and husband, Mike, Bobby Crawford and wife, Cyndie, Carolyn Butler and husband, Bradley, Teresa McGee and husband, Scott; 15 grandchildren; and four great-grand children.

Robert A. Martin



Robert A. Martin, former editor and publisher of The Montgomery Independent, died Sept. 15, after an extended illness. He is survived by his wife, Nancy, four children: Jeff, Jenny, Jamie and Jeremy, and 10 grandchildren. He

was preceded in death by parents Calvin Grady Martin and Lou Sellie Box Martin

Martin began his newspaper career with The Florence Times of Florence, Alabama, now known as The TimesDaily, while attending Florence State University, now the University of North Alabama (UNA). As a college student, Martin began in the mail room, worked in circulation and started covering high school football games. He became a sports reporter and eventually sports editor. He continued to advance at The Times ultimately becoming its executive editor.

In 1972, Martin, with family in tow, followed newly elected Chief Justice Howell Heflin to Montgomery where he began a 25-year career with the Administrative Office of the Courts working under Chief Justices Heflin, C.C. "Bo" Torbert, Sonny Hornsby and Perry Hooper. Sr. Martin earned his Juris Doctor

from Jones School of Law in 1989.

Throughout his career in both the newspaper business and as director of the courts, Martin became friends with and met many important figures, not the least of which was President John Kennedy. He also wrote many interesting stories about famous people in Alabama and the South. One of those was Buford Pusser, the sheriff depicted in the famous movie Walking Tall. Pusser was the Sheriff of McNairy County, Tennessee, not far from Florence.

While at the AOC, Bob played a vital role in passing the Judicial Article, which unified and standardized the public's interaction with Alabama courts.

After spending 25 years working for the State of Alabama, Martin felt a call to continue his first career, the news business. Martin purchased The Montgomery Independent in March 1997 and soon after retired from the State of Alabama to dedicate all of his time to the publication.

His primary goal as editor and publisher of The Montgomery Independent was to remain dedicated to covering community affairs, especially those events that received little or no attention from other media outlets. Martin's weekly editorial was syndicated in other newspapers throughout the state and was a regular guest on Alabama Public Television's For the Record and Capitol Journal. One area of excellence for the newspaper

under Martin's leadership was state government reporting and opinion. Martin worked diligently to provide a variety of commentary related to state issues, which became a hallmark of the newspaper along with its reporting of local society events and the coverage of high school sports.

Bob served as president of the Alabama Press Association (APA) Journalism Foundation in 2008. Felicia Mason, executive director of the APA remembers Martin's service to the foundation.

"Bob has provided sound leadership to APA through his service on the APA Board and as president of the APA Journalism Foundation. His interest in journalism education helped countless students through the grants, internships and scholarships offered through the Foundation. He was a staunch advocate for programs supporting high school journalism and for the Newspapers In Education programs, which provided newspapers to classrooms throughout the state."

Martin often said he cherished the time he spent with the state and is especially proud of his long, ongoing efforts to improve the justice system in Alabama. "My time with the Courts was very rewarding and exciting, but my first love was always 'newspapering,'" using one of his favorite phrases.

(from the Montgomery Independent)

Columns

Who do you support on the election ballot?



by Jim Pumarlo

Election season is in its final stretch, and newspapers have been there at every step. You've introduced candidates. You've quizzed them on the issues. You've covered the debates. Your coverage has laid the foundation for a rich exchange among readers on who they support or oppose – and why.

I encourage you to take the final step: Offer your own recommendations on which individuals are best suited to fill the offices on the November ballot.

I admit that editorial endorsements become more scarce each election cycle. It troubles me, and it confounds me. During my tenure as editor of the Red Wing (Minn.) Republican Eagle, we endorsed in every primary and general election race from the local city council, school board and county board to legislative contests to U.S. president.

We considered endorsements a natural progression of our coverage of public affairs. We considered endorsements a right and a responsibility as a community institution.

I've heard the arguments against endorsements. I politely – and firmly – offer my rebuttals.

What gives a newspaper the right to tell someone how to vote?

No editorial should be positioned as the right opinion – or the only opinion – on any subject. Putting yourself on a pedestal is the wrong mind-set. Rather, approach editorials as offering a distinct perspective from your role as a clearinghouse of information in your community. Editorials can offer pertinent information on candidates and ballot initiatives that may not be readily available to all readers.

We're fooling ourselves if we believe

our editorials really are changing anyone's mind.

Many individuals indeed vote the party line in today's heightened partisanship. Political strategists readily identify the "red" and "blue" districts and focus their money and efforts on "swing" districts and the undecided voters. That is more likely the case for contests at the state and federal levels. The dynamics can be quite different in local, nonpartisan races where candidates often are political newcomers and can be relatively unknown to the electorate.

Local endorsements are complicated due to personal relationships that candidates may have with our publisher and other key staff members.

The best advice: "Just the facts, please." In most cases stick to issues and avoid personalities. It is naive to believe that personal relationships between newspaper management and candidates do not play a role in endorsements, but issues ought to be the foundation for each decision.

Our staff is too small to have an editorial board. Reporters who cover the respective individuals and government bodies would have an obvious conflict of interest.

Quite the contrary, Endorsements, by definition, are subjective. You objectively gather all the facts and then offer a recommendation. The process is strengthened in your ability to gather as much information as possible. Reporters are in a premier position to offer insight into the strengths and weaknesses of local government – and the values and attributes offered by individuals to elevate these bodies to the next level.

We're already strapped for resources. We just don't have the time.

No question, endorsements take work. They cannot be done on a whim. That said, you've done the lion's share of the research if you are doing a

steady job of covering public affairs. You've gathered similar information on other candidates – the newcomers – through your other election coverage.

Most perplexing about the hesitancy to endorse candidates is that many newspapers routinely weigh in on the actions of government bodies. It's common for editorials to offer advice on an upcoming vote, or to offer a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" on a decision by elected officials.

It begs the question: If you believe so strongly in a position taken by an elected body, shouldn't a newspaper have equally strong convictions about the people who ultimately will make those decisions?

As a starting point, brainstorm the priority issues in each race. These issues will be the basis for candidate interviews, and the candidates' responses will provide a framework for endorsements.

It's understandable that newspapers still may be skeptical about endorsing in local races. So, consider this idea as a starting point. Write an editorial outlining what the newspaper identifies as the key issues in a race – and where you stand on these issues. Then encourage readers to vote for the individuals who align with those stances. You have not identified specific candidates, but your message allows readers to connect the dots.

The final step is to allow feedback. The effectiveness of any editorial is minimized if readers aren't allowed to debate its merits.

Newspapers routinely promote the editorial page as the heart of democracy. Readers may challenge your practice of "telling us who to vote for," but they will be doubly upset if you don't give them an opportunity to challenge the reasons behind your endorsements.

Jim Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He can be reached at jim@pumarlo.com.

Columns

Ten ways to mess up an online presentation



Ad-libs
by John Foust

These days, ad professionals are conducting more digital presentations than ever before. While there are some similarities with in-person meetings, there are some significant differences. Let's take a quick look at 10 of the biggest mistakes in online presentations:

1. Problems with technology. "Can you hear me now?" is more than a line from an old television spot; it's a reality of many online conversations. As you plan the presentation, be sure to consider the meeting platform, webcams, and desktop-tablet-phone differences. It's better to address those issues ahead of time than to be surprised when things are underway.

2. Unprofessional appearance. Even if you're presenting from home or an informal business environment, it's important to look professional. While a business suit is not necessarily required, be sure to look neat. And don't forget to smile.

3. Camera movement. My wife had a recent call, in which one of the partic-

ipants started walking around with his laptop computer. For several minutes, the camera treated everyone to jerky views of his ceiling and kitchen cabinets, all while he was talking.

For goodness' sakes, keep the camera in one position.

4. Distractions. We all know it's not good to see someone fumbling with papers during a meeting at a conference table. That's just as bad in an online presentation, because it indicates disorganization.

In addition, be sure to clean up your background, so it is simple and free of clutter.

5. Hard-to-see exhibits and graphics. Advance planning is the key, here. If you display ads or charts, prepare carefully so everything will go smoothly. If you hold something up to the camera, make sure it is super-simple and in steady hands.

6. Winging it. There's a sneaky little voice in some salespersons' minds that says, "Hey, you're not meeting in someone else's office. You're in familiar surroundings, and you know so much about your product that you can make the sale just by talking off the cuff."

Don't listen to that voice. The only

way to be at your best is to prepare and practice.

7. Not acknowledging everyone. There is often a tendency to talk to the main contact and pay little attention to others in a meeting. That's always bad manners, whether face-to-face or on a screen.

8. Talking in a monotone. It's not just what you say; it's how you say it. One of the fastest ways to lose attention is to speak in a tone of voice that lacks energy and enthusiasm.

Put some excitement in your words.

9. Talking too much. A remote call is not a license to "talk at" people. Whatever the format, a sales conversation should be a dialogue, not a monologue. Think of ways to encourage conversation. Ask plenty of questions and respond to their answers with respect.

10. Not listening between the lines. Watch for facial expressions and listen for voice infections, just like you do in on-site presentations. If you don't, you may miss something which could be a deal maker or deal breaker.

John Foust conducts training programs for newspaper advertising professionals. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

Into the Issues



Into the Issues
by Al Cross

A new maxim – or is it a mandate? – of the newspaper business is "Get more revenue from your audience." But that doesn't have to come entirely in the form of higher subscription or single-copy prices; if you produce good journalism, you can get direct contributions from readers, and some community newspapers have proven it.

That was the big headline from "Success Stories in Rural Journalism," a webinar the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues held with four community editors on July 30. The frame for it was our belief that the two main solutions to challenges facing the news business are quality journalism, and helping people understand what it is – distinguishing journalism from other kinds of information, and helping people realize its value.

That's why two of our webinar guests were from papers whose readers have demonstrated through donations that they know their papers' value: John Gregg, news editor of the daily Valley News in West Lebanon, N.H., and Laurie Ezzell Brown, editor and publisher of The Canadian Record, a weekly in the Texas Panhandle. Direct reader support is helping the News thrive, and it's helping the Record survive.

When the pandemic suppressed advertising and the Newspapers of New England chain decided to appeal for reader donations, the News set a goal of \$50,000. "Within five days we got that from about 600 contributors," Gregg said. "By early June we had raised \$155,000 from about 1,500 people." It made The Rural Blog, at <https://tinyurl.com/y2tuorvy>.

Residents of the 40 Upper Connecticut River Valley towns covered by the Valley News clearly wanted to keep reading a first-class small daily. The paper

emphasizes local news but also is part of the Granite State News Collaborative and uses material from VTDigger, a Vermont investigative newsroom.

Readers, who Gregg said "vary from fifth-generation dairy farmers to school bus drivers to heart surgeons," surely appreciated the News's comprehensive coverage of the pandemic, which Gregg discussed on the webinar and was exempted from the daily's five-story paywall. "It was so clear that people were really dependent on us for news and were, you know, stuck at home, and all the more we were their connection to the community."

Coronavirus news made Brown publish more pages in her weekly than she probably should have, but people in Hemphill County are accustomed to extra effort from the Record, which has been in her family for 75 years. But the last three years have been hard, she said.

issues continued on page 8

issues continued from page 7

"We've survived crippling ice storms, devastating drought, deadly wildfires and tornadoes, and dramatic downturns in our two main industries . . . oil and gas, and cattle ranching," Brown said. "It doesn't even hold a candle to the impact of the virus has had on the small businesses that . . . had been our essential partners in in the business of delivering the news to our readers."

But two years ago, a seed was planted that has helped the paper survive. When a county commissioner said at a meeting, "Nobody reads the newspaper anymore," Brown wrote an editorial explaining how wrong he was and inviting him to read the paper. "The response to that was pretty immediate, and very emotional," she recalled.

As the economy worsened, Brown was frank with her readers: "The Record is facing an uncertain financial future." She said in the webinar, "I worry that we've written too much about the difficulty newspapers are facing today. I have never wanted to make us the story. But I realized at some point that it IS the story, that it's one that's crucial to our communities and that needs telling, and that what happens next will reshape the future of our communities."

As the pandemic made Brown wonder if she could keep publishing, she got a let-

ter from "a well-seasoned rancher" who "announced that he was writing \$1,000 check to start a fund to help keep the Canadian Record going and invited others to do the same. This was completely unsolicited; it came out of the blue," and more donations came. "The fund that Jerry established has been the thing that's kept us going for at least two months; we're not paying the bills any other way."

Landmark Community Newspapers hasn't asked for donations, but it has kept up its editorial quality, as Executive Editor John Nelson made clear with examples on the webinar, such as in-depth coverage of opioids by The Lancaster (S.C.) News, Missouri River floods by the Opinion-Tribune of Glenwood, Iowa, and proposed "guardians" of schools by the Citrus County Chronicle in Florida.

The example from Nelson that really rang our bell, though, was a column by Editor-Publisher Ben Carlson of The Anderson News in Lawrenceburg, Ky., in Landmark's company newsletter. It told how a man whose 14-year-old son had drowned refused to talk with TV reporters because "He did not want anyone to tell the story but the Anderson News."

Carlson wrote that he shared the story "for those of you who feel beaten down by circulation struggles, revenue concerns and the constant drumbeat about how our industry is not only dying, it has become irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes. We'd like to sell more pa-

pers and advertising, but the value of our newspapers is more than the amount of money we deposit in the bank each week. To the communities we serve, we are where they come when things go right, but more importantly when things go horribly wrong. They trust us because they know us and that isn't something that any month in recap or spreadsheet can ever reflect."

Nelson said, "I think I think Ben speaks for all of our committed rural editors."

Jennifer P. Brown, editor-publisher of the Hoptown Chronicle, a digital startup in Hopkinsville, Ky., provided another example of how giving readers news they need and want can pay off. When the pandemic hit, she converted the startup's weekly newsletter ("almost like they were having a weekly paper delivered to them digitally") into a daily coronavirus report, and her readership more than doubled. "Our coronavirus coverage really transformed Hoptown Chronicle and made many more readers aware of what we could do for them," she said. You can watch the webinar at <https://tinyurl.com/y628bsdc>. We hope to have more such webinars as we build a national community of rural journalists. If you have ideas for them, let us know.

Al Cross is director of the University of Kentucky's Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, which publishes The Rural Blog at <http://irjci.blogspot.com>.

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